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Forage News

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## Forage News [2001-03]

Department of Plant and Soil Sciences, University of Kentucky

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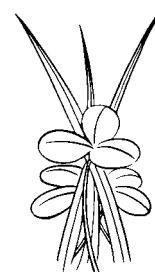
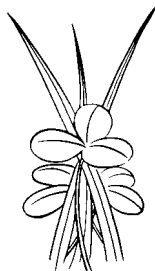
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# FORAGE NEWS



## In this month's issue:

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## March 2001

*Garry D. Lacefield and Jimmy C. Henning, Extension Forage Specialists • Christi Forsythe, Secretary*

### ALFALFA AWARDS

The Kentucky Forage & Grassland Council presented the first Kentucky Alfalfa Awards at the Alfalfa Conference held in Cave City on March 1. The awards were established in honor of the 20<sup>th</sup> annual Alfalfa conference last year. The Warren Thompson Alfalfa Industry Award was presented to Bill Talley of Princeton. Bill is marketing director for Seedbiotics and has been a strong promoter of alfalfa production in Kentucky and nationally. He is currently President of the Kentucky Forage Council and serves on the Board of Directors of the American Forage & Grassland Council.

The Garry Lacefield Public Service to Alfalfa Award was presented to two former University of Kentucky forage professors. Dr. Bill Templeton and Dr. Tim Taylor helped establish the foundation for the strong forage research and Extension programs in Kentucky. While they have both been retired for many years, their work continues to influence and inspire those of us who follow in their footsteps.

The Charles Schnitzler Alfalfa Producer Award was presented to Larry Jeffries from Henry County. Larry is a strong supporter of the forage industry - not only in Kentucky, but nationally as well. He served as President of the Kentucky Forage and Grassland Council and the American Forage and Grassland Council. He provides leadership to many organizations and is always ready to help out whenever he is called on - which is often!

Congratulations to all the recipients of the 2001 Kentucky Alfalfa Awards! (Monroe Rasnake)

### 2001 KENTUCKY GRAZING SCHOOL

Sign up now for the 2001 Spring Kentucky Grazing School, to be held at the Washington County Extension office in Springfield. The school is Tuesday April 17 to Thursday April 19 with a registration fee of \$100 per person. This fee covers all meals, breaks, the Kentucky Grazing Manual, a copy of Southern Forages and the Forage Pocket Guide. The school starts with registration at 7:30 AM on Tuesday April 17 and finishes just after lunch on April 19<sup>th</sup>.

To register for the school, please send your check for \$100, payable to the Kentucky Forage and Grassland Council, to Ken Johnson, PO Box 700, Tompkinsville, KY 42167. You may contact Ken at 270.487.6589 ext 3. Further information is available from Ken or from Jimmy Henning (859.257.3144, [jhenning@ca.uky.edu](mailto:jhenning@ca.uky.edu)) or Garry Lacefield (270.365.7541 ext

202, [glacefie@ca.uky.edu](mailto:glacefie@ca.uky.edu)).

This school features classroom and hands-on training and will enable you to set up a sound grazing system when you get back to the farm. Spaces are limited to the first 45 that sign up. Don't delay, call Ken today.

The Washington County Extension Office is at 211 Progress Street, which is one block north and ½ block east of the intersection of Ky 150 and Ky 555 (Phone 859.336.7741).

### KENTUCKY CATTLE NUMBERS RISE SLIGHTLY

Still trying to bounce back from the drought of 1999, cattle numbers in Kentucky grew slightly in 2000. Total cattle and calves on Kentucky farms January 1, 2001 numbered 2.26 million head, up 1 percent from a 39 year low of 2.23 million head last year. Inventory levels were down from January 1, 2000 for milk replacement heifers and calves less than 500 pounds.

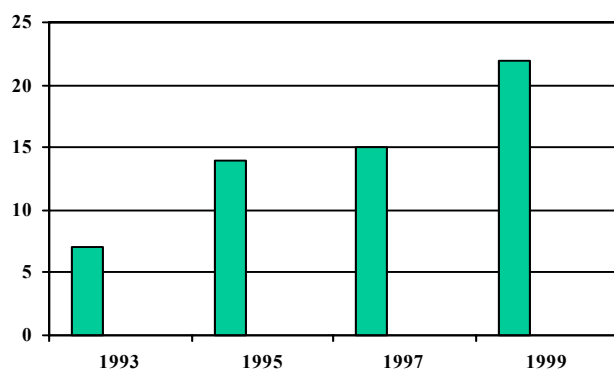
Bulls and milk cows remained unchanged, while all other inventory levels were up. All cow inventory for 2001 totaled 1.19 million head up from 1.18 million in 2000. Beef cow inventory was up 1 percent from last year to 1.06 million. Milk cows remained at a record low level of 130,000 head. Bulls over 500 pounds totaled 70,000 head, unchanged from 2000. Heifers over 500 pounds inventory was set at 300,000 head, up 11 percent from a year ago. Beef replacement heifers were also up from the previous year totaling 160,000 head, a 10 percent increase. Milk replacement heifers dropped 11 percent to 40,000 head, while heifers for other uses increased 25 percent to 100,000 head. Steers over 500 pounds totaled 200,000, 11 percent above the previous year. Calves under 500 pounds dropped 6 percent to 500,000 head.

The 2000 calf crop was estimated at 1.09 million head, 3 percent below the 1999 level. Cattle on feed for slaughter totaled 20,000 head, up from 15,000 head on January 1, 2000. (SOURCE: NASS Kentucky Agri-News, Vol. #20, Issue #3, Feb. 1, 2001)

### HOW WIDESPREAD IS THE PRACTICE OF MANAGEMENT INTENSIVE ROTATIONAL (MIRG) GRAZING IN WISCONSIN?

The rate of MIRG (moving to a new pasture at least once a week) use among Wisconsin dairy farms has increased sharply throughout the 1990s. Figure 1 displays the prevalence and growth of MIRG practices among Wisconsin dairy operations based on the results of four major random sample surveys carried out from 1993 to 1999. While in 1993 just over seven percent of the dairy farms surveyed were utilizing MIRG systems, by 1995 this number had doubled to 14 percent, and by 1999 it had more than tripled to 22 percent of all dairy farms. Projecting from the proportion of MIRG farms in our survey results and the total number of licensed dairy farms in Wisconsin, there were roughly 4,700 Wisconsin dairy farmers using MIRG practices as we defined them in 1999. The most rapid increase in MIRG adoption occurred during the period between 1993 and 1995 when rates of MIRG use doubled and the number of farms utilizing MIRG increased by 74 percent. (SOURCE: Marcia R. Ostrom and Douglas B. Jackson-Smith, PATS Research Report No. 8, University of Wisconsin-Madison)

**Figure 1. Percent of WI Dairy Farms Using MIRG**



### LITTLE BENEFIT FROM SCLEROTINIA-RESISTANT ALFALFA VARIETIES

Sclerotinia crown and stem rot (SCSR) is a common disease that can cause serious stand loss in fall-seeded alfalfa. Some varieties are reported to have some resistance to this disease. Growers should understand that those reports are often based on research conducted in other states, with less disease pressure than in Kentucky. In UK research, we have seen little to no benefit from these varieties under natural conditions. We recently completed a test at the Randy Nelson Farm, Adair County, with similar results. A uniform, vigorous stand of alfalfa was established in autumn, 1996. The following spring, stand loss from SCSR was severe in all varieties. Although the stand was thin enough to abandon, the test was continued for research purposes. By last April, Cimarron VR provided a modest improvement in ground cover over Fortress. This is the first time we have seen statistically significant improvement in plant health from SCSR-resistant varieties in a UK research trial. However, even in Cimarron VR, there was still incomplete alfalfa ground cover three years after the initial outbreak. WL 332 SR, a variety marketed as being Sclerotinia-resistant, showed no significant improvement in ground cover over the susceptible check. We have tested this variety twice with similar results. We suspect that WL 332 SR has some genes for resistance to SCSR, since it has performed well in tests further north, but evidently its resistance is not sufficient under Kentucky conditions. Our

results from Adair County and previous studies suggest the following.

1. If given enough time, certain alfalfa varieties with partial resistance to SCSR may provide for a modest but statistically significant improvement in stand health for fall seedings, should SCSR become active at the site.
2. Under conditions of high disease pressure, alfalfa varieties with partial resistance will not provide complete control of SCSR.
3. Some varieties reported to have partial resistance to SCSR may not exhibit any resistance under Kentucky conditions.

(P. Vincelli, J. Henning, and D. Herbst)

Cultivar	% ground cover	% ground cover	
	6 May 97 <sup>1</sup>	12 Apr 00	28 Apr 00
Cimarron VR	22	63 a <sup>2</sup>	79 a
WL 322 SR	13	46 b	68 b
Fortress (susceptible check)	7	41 b	62 b

<sup>1</sup> ANOVA effect for cultivar is insignificant ( $P>0.2$ )  
<sup>2</sup> Means followed by the same letter are not significantly different, Waller-Duncan k-ratio t-test,  $k=100$ ,  $P=0.05$

### 21<sup>ST</sup> KENTUCKY ALFALFA CONFERENCE

The 21<sup>st</sup> Kentucky Alfalfa Conference was a big success with over 200 participants. All exhibit space was sold. Participants heard eleven speakers discuss cutting-edge issues concerning establishment, production, harvesting, management, utilization and marketing. Outstanding hay winners were recognized during lunch and presented certificates by Agriculture Commissioner Billy Ray Smith.

Plans are underway to remodel and expand the Cave City Convention Center. This change will permit us to expand our trade show area and have afternoon breakout sessions.

My THANKS to all who contributed to the success of the 21<sup>st</sup> Kentucky Alfalfa Conference.

### UPCOMING EVENTS

APR 17-19      Grazing School, Springfield

*Garry D. Lacefield Jimmy C. Henning*  
 Garry D. Lacefield      Jimmy C. Henning  
 Extension Forage Specialists  
 March 2001